

BIRTH AND DEATH.

By A. R. McAlpine.

The angel Life with infant child
Before the August Presence bows.
The while the quickening breath of God
With living soul the babe endows,
Divine of the Mysteries.

The angel Death with folded wing
Keeps guard above the churchyard sod.
"Alas!" he mourns, "my prize is dust,
The living soul is safe with God.
How barren are my victories!"

The Melville Court Burglary

By Herbert Jamieson.

I.

My instructions reached me over the telephone. "Hello! Are you there? That you, Phillips?"

"Yes!"
"Mrs. Warrington Stout's jewels have been stolen. Probably only a common or garden burglary, but as the Stouts have wired for a special man to go down and investigate you'd better take over the job. Know their country place?"

"Grantham, isn't it?"
"Yes! Melville Court, about a mile from Grantham Station. You'll catch the next train, and report as soon as possible."

"To-night, if I get back in time!"
"That's all, then. Goodbye!"

"Goodbye."
The Warrington Stouts were known to me—from the society columns of numerous daily and weekly papers. Worth and estimable people they might be, but the tazzilion in which they were persistently paraphrased, although it only created a mild feeling of disgust in an obscure person like myself, must have made certain other less advertised members of society than themselves exceedingly jealous. Their leap into prominence had probably been too sudden to last.

I caught the 2.30 p. m. from King's Cross to Grantham.

Among other literature with which to beguile the two hours' journey I had purchased "P. A. P." ("Principally About People.") When I opened it I found that it contained an autobiographical article by Mr. Warrington Stout, who was described as the husband of one of society's leaders. This description was, needless to say, editorial. In three columns of verbose and occasionally illiterate pomposity, Mr. Warrington Stout only referred to his wife once. He could hardly have mentioned the family jewels without bringing her in.

I kicked the opposite seat (I was alone in the carriage) in what, I felt, was righteous indignation, and was almost choked by the dust. Why, oh, why do people do these silly things in print? That paragraph in Warrington Stout's article was simply an open invitation to the burgling community to enter Melville Court (address given) and lay hands on the jewels. For in these days Bill Sikes is an educated gentleman, who gets half his ideas from the daily papers and the other half from the magazine stories.

After reading that article I felt my duties in the work of this particular investigation wane. If only I might be allowed to kick Warrington Stout on my arrival, I fancied I might enter on the inquiry with requisite zest.

Mrs. Warrington Stout in an elaborate dress and a still more elaborate manner, alone received me.

"Oh, you've come. My husband is out riding. He cannot do without his usual afternoon exercise, but he'll be back shortly. Meanwhile, I'll tell you the whole story."

She proceeded to give me at great length an account that can be summed up in a very few sentences.

The previous night, it seemed, she had been alone, her husband crossing the Channel on his way home from Paris. She slept soundly until just as daylight broke, a noise in the room suddenly awoke her, and she opened her eyes to see a man's back vanishing through the window. One glance at the dressing table showed her that her jewel box, with all its contents, was gone. She screamed violently, pealed the bell and aroused the whole household. The grounds were instantly searched, but, although footmarks were found on the bed below the window, the thief had evidently got safely away with his booty.

Mrs. Warrington Stout here made a pause.

"And is that all, madam?"
"Dear me, no! I was waiting, expecting that you would take notes. A still more startling discovery was speedily made. That day a new butler had come in. After the burglary he was nowhere to be found, and his bed had not been slept in."

"You have arrived at the obvious conclusion—he stole the jewels?"

"That is the only possible solution."
"Yet you did not actually recognize his back as he disappeared through the window?"

"I was not sufficiently acquainted with his appearance to be quite certain on that point. You see, he only arrived here yesterday afternoon. My husband engaged him in town; I had not seen him previously. Now shall I call

up the servants one by one for you to cross-examine them?"

"Pardon me, there is no need."

"But isn't it usual?"

"Hardly—under the circumstances! The butler's guilt is, I take it, a matter beyond dispute."

"Yes, of course, but"—and she looked at me as though she doubted if I were an inquiry agent at all, so unorthodox were my proceedings. I sustained my character by producing a notebook.

"I presume, madam, that you can account for the new butler's abrupt departure on no other score?"

"Certainly not!"

"Then please give me a description of the man to the best of your remembrance."

As she founded off her description with the exclamation, "Oh, my valuable jewels!" a small hurricane came into the room in the person of Mr. Warrington Stout. He was dressed in a loud check suit, an aggressive green cap (which he retained on his head, presumably because he thought my social position inferior to his), and in his hand he carried a riding whip.

"Think you'll catch the beggar, eh?" he remarked, surveying me through his monocle.

I opined that with the priceless assistance of the local police the thing was possible.

"Pity I was in the chops of the channel at the time! If only I'd been here what a time he would have had!" and he flourished the whip alarmingly in the air.

"Oh, Peter, you couldn't have done more than I did!" exclaimed his wife, applying her pocket handkerchief to her eyes.

Personally I thought Peter would have done more. He would have pulled that bell pull in their bedroom right down.

I declined the offer of refreshment (which would have been partaken of, I felt convinced, in the servants' hall), took a snack at Grantham Station and caught the next train back to town.

By this time I had mentally resolved that those local police should have the honor and glory of hunting down the pseudo-butler which that fool had engaged, and recovering the stolen articles.

If Mrs. Warrington Stout's jewels did not blaze this season in Covent Garden Opera House, so much the better.

Which was a man's view, of course, and wholly unprofessional.

II.

I went the following evening to one of the best known of the London music halls. Variety entertainments do not often attract me, but the special excellence of the program promised something out of the ordinary, and the promise was kept. A succession of turns, increasing in interest, concluded with the usual pictures on the bioscope, which I always find intensely fascinating.

A humorous series was first shown, and then appeared on the screen the title of the next:

"Arrival of the Scotch Express at King's Cross."

The time and date of the taking of the picture were shown. It was 7.10 a. m. on the previous day. The bioscope is nothing if not up-to-date.

First you saw the people on the station awaiting the arrival of the train. Some things do not strike you as funny until you see them in a picture. That ragged line of porters, standing anywhere and at all angles, made me laugh. Somehow I felt that they ought to be drawn up in military line, and every man jack of them made to salute the brave engine-driver as he brought the huge locomotive gracefully to rest at the platform. Then an inspector ought to call "Break away!" and they should fall upon the luggage with their accustomed ferocity.

But my whimsical idea was soon put to flight, for there, talking to a porter in the immediate foreground of the picture was somebody so closely resembling Mr. Warrington Stout that I—

At that moment the man I was watching turned full face to the audience. It was Warrington Stout, without the shadow of a doubt.

The events of yesterday, to which I had not given a thought all the evening, trooped back into my mind. If Stout really crossed the Channel at the time he declared, by no possibility could he be waiting on King's Cross platform at 7.10 last morning. My interest in the Melville Court burglary

grew at once extraordinarily profound.

The train was seen to draw in, carriage doors to be flung open and passengers to alight. But Warrington Stout was for me the center of interest. Although he had partially turned round, and I now had only a view of his side face. I could see that he was intently watching all the passengers by the train. Then he took a step forward, apparently having recognized some one. A second later he and a clean shaven young man in a bowler hat were standing face to face. In the latter's hand was something wrapped in brown paper, apparently an oblong box; he was carrying nothing else. Stout looked at the parcel, nodded approvingly, and clasped the young man on the shoulder. Then he hurried him away to the cab-rank lining the platform, hailed a hansom, gave directions to their driver, and both stepped inside.

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed aloud and the people on either side of me edged away from an apparent lunatic.

The detective fever fairly raged in my veins. The man whom Warrington Stout had met at King's Cross was I felt convinced, the missing butler; the description exactly tallied. And the box he was carrying, at which Stout glanced with such approval, contained, without a shadow of a doubt, the missing jewels.

"A Naval Review," began to be shown on the bioscope, but for me the performance was over. I rose from my seat and left the theatre. I had all the pieces of a strange puzzle in my hands; they only required putting together. It was perfectly clear that Warrington Stout was a party to the theft and a receiver of his own jewels. My valuable assistance had been sought to elucidate a bogus burglary. Faugh!

I went straight to my humble flat and looked up an "A. B. C." The train that reached King's Cross at 7.10 a. m. stopped at Grantham at 5.06 a. m. If Mrs. Stout's story was correct, and the burglary took place at daybreak, say, between 4 and 4.30—the pseudo-butler could easily have reached Grantham Station and caught this train. That point established, I lit my pipe and considered others.

What was Warrington Stout's object in making away with his wife's jewels? Assuming for the moment her innocence in the matter, I asked myself the reason of the queer plot that he had hatched.

Was he jealous of those jewels? A society woman's fame rests—with shame, let it be said—less on her personality than on the ornaments with which she crowds her person. Was this man envious of that fame? Had those glittering jewels usurped the love and care that he felt, ought to have been showered upon him? Did he fancy that the wearing of baubles worth thousands of pounds was blighting and destroying the soul of the wearer, and had he chosen this extraordinary method of putting them in a place of security—probably some bank? And was my summons to Melville Court merely a rather daring device to appease and delude further his wife?

I summed up my impressions of Warrington Stout. No, he was neither a sentimentalist nor a moralist. My first shot must be wide of the mark.

More whiffs of my pipe. Ah, I had it!

The Warrington Stouts were in financial difficulties, and found themselves under the painful necessity of raising money. To plan a fictitious burglary was really a most picturesque way of accounting for the absence of valuables that you have taken yourself or employed a deputy to take to the sign of the three balls. You get ready money in hand and a splendid advertisement for yourself in the bargain.

I rose early next morning, and by 7 o'clock was at King's Cross arrival platform. The chances were about even that that same hansom cab driver met the 7.10 on most mornings of the week, and I fancied that, brief as was his appearance before the bioscope, I could manage to pick him out. For one thing, he was wearing a top hat, and in these days of strenuous competition with taxicabs not many drivers of horse vehicles can rise to that height of affluence.

I found my man.

He was surly at first, but I disclosed my identity, produced my authority and, if he had not been seated on his perch, I am sure he would have licked the dust before me. Yes, he remembered those two gentlemen perfectly.

"Where did you drive them to?"

"St. Paul's, guv'nor."

This seemed incongruous.

"The cathedral?"

"No. St. Paul's Station, by the river."

"Oh, I see. They went inside, I suppose, and took train for somewhere?"

"They just did. They walked over the bridge. There wasn't a copper by, so I just gave the gee 'is rein and sat munchin' a bit of breakfast."

"And you watched them cross the bridge?"

"No, I was moved on afore they got right across. But I did see them do somethin' as you might be interested to 'arn."

"Oh, what was that?"

"Well, when they reached the water the older one took something out of the parcel as the other was a-carryin', and threw it over the bridge-plump!"

"Did you see what it was?"

"Not loikely, at that distance! Thought as they were a-feedin' the fishes, that's all, with some sandwiches they 'adn't used up in the train. Then, as I said afore, a copper came up an' moved me on, an' I lost sight o' the gents. Thank you, sir, you're a real gentleman! 'Ope you'll catch 'em if you wants 'em, sir.' I passed thoughtfully out of the stations. Events had taken a strange and unexpected turn. Clearly the jewels had been thrown into the river. Cast your bread upon the waters, and—no, the proverb could not apply.

It was very mystifying. Did Warrington Stout belong to the tribe of fanatics? I had heard of a man who, turned teetotaler, caused all the contents of his valuable wine cellar to be poured down the drains. Had Stout suddenly perceived the extreme sinfulness of his wife's wearing jewels and taken this summary method of putting them out of temptation's reach for everybody?

But that would have been a madman's act, and Stout was sane enough.

Then the jewels must be false. I stepped dead on the pavement, and a man who was following immediately behind me cursed audibly. For I had suddenly caught sight of a poster on an advertisement boarding. In big capitals it started thus: "There are thousands of professional burglars known to the police. Insure against burglary with the Lion Insurance Company."

My problem was solved. And the solution was so ridiculously simple I felt ashamed of myself for not having discovered it long ago.

I managed to restrain my impatience until 10 o'clock. At that hour I entered the office of the Lion Insurance Company, in Cornhill, and asked for my friend, Percival Austin, the manager. He had not arrived yet, the clerk informed me, but was expected within a very few minutes. Oh, these city magnates, who pretend they are so heavily overworked! I waited.

He strolled in at a quarter past 10, and considerably gave me precedence over the contents of the mail. I followed him into his private room.

"Well, Phillips, you're an early bird."

"I'm sorry I can't return the compliment."

"Dear public dinner last night! Had to go though I hate them like poison. Got some news for us, I hope?"

"News?"

"Yes, about this Melville Court burglary. Warrington Stout wired that he was not content with the efforts of the Grantham police to find the thief, but had put the matter in the hands of your firm at well. Very good of him, I thought it, taking all that trouble, at his own expense when he was so well insured."

I looked into my hat, for my expression was a tell tale one. So mine were not the only eyes in which Warrington Stout had contrived to throw dust!

"Ah!" I said, off-handedly. "I really forgot to ask him whether he was insured or not. Not covered entirely with you, I suppose?"

"No, the amount was too large for us to take the entire risk. We share it with another company and with Lloyds."

"Then it will be rather a big loss altogether?"

"Yes, unless you manage to recover any of the stolen things for us. By the way, what did you come about, if not about this burglary?"

"Oh, I'll tell you in a moment. You are going to meet the claim, I suppose?"

"Of course! It's all sound and square. The Stouts have been most obliging in giving our representative every possible assistance."

"Ah!"

"What is it, Phillips? Your manner is most mysterious."

"I came here for information. Unconsciously, you've supplied me with all I want to know. Now, I'll give you a piece of advice, Austin. Don't pay Warrington Stout's claim—not one penny of it!"

"Why not?" he gasped.

"Because, firstly, the diamonds were paste, the jewels worthless, with no insurable value whatever. Because, secondly, Warrington Stout himself organized the theft of that sham jewelry and threw it with his own hands into the mud of the Thames, where it now lies embedded. Listen!"

This story will have an abrupt ending. It is not more abrupt, however, than the departure from Melville Court and London Society of the Warrington Stouts. When a certain letter from the Lion Insurance Company reached them, they simply vanished. My communication from the Lion Insurance Company was more satisfactory.

Some of my friends do not understand my recent partiality for a bioscope entertainment. To them, it is puerile, inartistic, and often produces headache.

Now they will understand.—Black and White.

ART OF DANCING LOST.

Choreographic Congress to Discuss Question and Provide Remedy.

Is dancing degenerating? Next month, in Berlin, will be held an international choreographic congress which will have to answer that grave question. M. Lefort, secretary of the French Choreographic Association, gives a forecast of the task which will lie before the meeting.

"The art of dancing," he said, threatens to lose all its charm if something be not done in time. Either dancers turn like teetotums with stiffened joints or they make violent efforts to look graceful, with still more dire results, leaping about, contorting themselves and gesticulating grotesquely. This, sir, is a lamentable state of things. Dancing should, above all, have grace, and elegance, and should impart distinction to the bearing. The dancer should study to acquire elasticity and suppleness of movement, not the habit of disarticulating his or her limbs—a most disastrous practice.

"Department is the first thing to be learned, and it will be useful to the proficient pupil in all walks of life. It was thus in the olden times, in the day of Prevot, of Galant du Desart and of Guillaume Raynal, who were dancing masters at the court of King Louis XIV, who founded the Academy of Dancing. Then the minuet, the gavotte, the pavane, the passepied, the forlane were danced. What could be more exquisite? But in 1860 the polka was introduced in France. That was the beginning of the end. To dance the polka the men held his partner around the waist. The novelty of the thing pleased the popular imagination. Good-bye, then, to the beautiful old dances in which partners just touched the tips of each other's fingers. The mazurka, the schottische followed, and the waltz, imported by Desart from Russia.

"Nowadays, when a man comes to us to learn dancing, he generally stipulates that he is to be taught only those dances in which he holds the girl round the waist; What have we come to? Still, there are hopes, after all. In the last few years some little has been done to restore to the art of dancing its pristine nobleness. Setting aside the inexplicable vogue, now happily past, of the Negro cakewalk, we observe that the Boston is increasingly popular in drawing rooms. The Boston comes from America.

"Let us thank the Americans, not for the step, which they did not invent, as it is none other than our own old-fashioned redowa, but for the development which they have given it, and which makes it an admirable physical exercise. The Boston gives breadth of movement and expands chest and lungs. This year we started with considerable success a new dance, 'the wave,' a kind of more undulating and gliding Boston, recalling the rhythm of the sea, hence its name. Next winter we intend to revive the old dances of France, the pavane and the gavotte, for instance, and we shall require our pupils to sing while dancing, a most graceful practice, and one calculated to develop the chest. That will be the chief article of our program at the Berlin congress."—Paris Cor. Philadelphia North American.

Who He Was.

We were sitting on the upper deck on the last day of the voyage home from Bremen. I had been introduced to her on the first day out, and we had many interesting talks together before the trip ended. She was a garrulous person and much given to gossip, but it was all harmless and without malice, I felt sure.

Not far away from us stood a young man who had a very intellectual air about him. He wore his hair very long and looked in every way the professional musician.

"Do you know him?" she asked.

"He plays"—I began, but she interrupted me and proceeded in her usual talkative fashion.

"O," she said, "I have heard nearly every violinist of note in my time. I have often regretted that I never had the chance of hearing the soul-stirring performances of Ole Bull, but I've listened, entranced, to the heavenly strains of Kubelik, and that was ecstasy indeed!"

"He plays"—I edged in, but she just ignored me and rattled on.

"And I've heard every modern pianist of note, too. Often I've been wrought to a high pitch of excitement by the adorable Paderewski. And then Joseffy, DePachman, Rosenthal, Saint-Saens!"

She seemed out of breath here and I got a chance to put in a few words.

"O," I said, "I saw him several times in the card-room on this trip, and, as I was about to say when you interrupted me, he plays the best game of pinochle of any Dutchman I ever met."

—Brooklyn Life.

Smilage.

Nervous traveler (to seat companion): How fast should you say you were traveling?

Companion (who has been flirting with the girl across the way): About a smile a minute.—Life.